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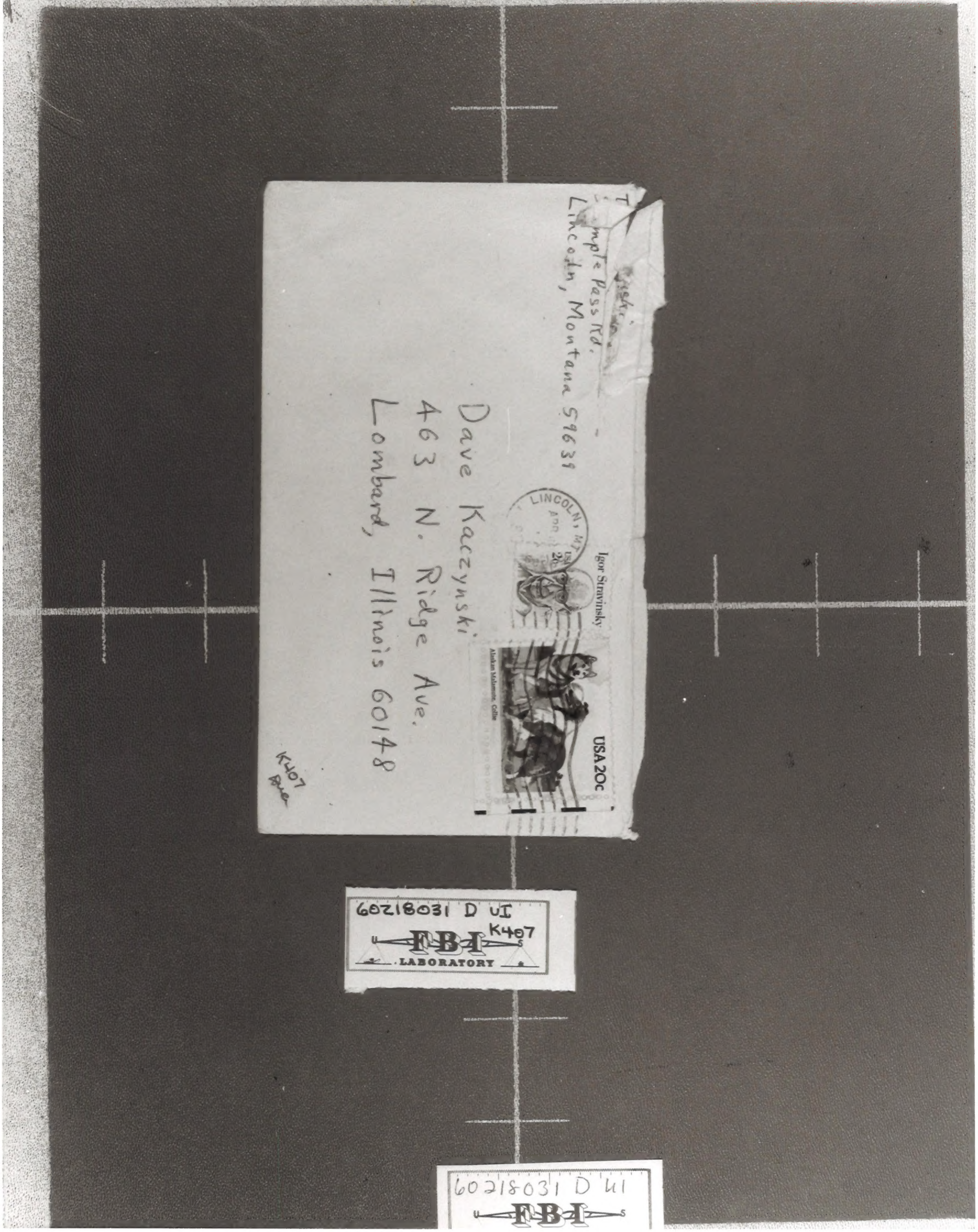
mple Pass Rd.
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[redacted]

On the back of this sheet you'll find a cartoon that is certainly not one of my best, but I'm sending it to you anyway because I find the idea amusing even though the drawing is poor. Not having a photo of Hitler to work from, I couldn't get his face right — and, that being poor, I didn't consider it worthwhile to try to do a good job on the rest of the drawing.

As to the identity of the 2 goose-stepping figures in the background: Goering was quite obese, and Goebbels was a skinny little runt who had to wear a special shoe because one leg was shorter than the other. So you can tell who is who.

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Dear Dave:

Something I've been meaning to say for some time but I'm only just now getting around to it:

Maybe you wonder why I've never asked to read any of your stories or other writings. What I want to say here is that it isn't just a matter of disdainfulness. The reasons why I've never asked to read your stuff are, for one thing, the fact that our tastes and attitudes differ considerably reduces the likelihood that I would like your stuff, and increases the likelihood that I would find it irritating. Furthermore, if it turned out that I didn't like it or considered it to be poor writing, I would be faced with 3 choices: either to praise it dishonestly (which I don't like to do), or to criticize it more or less freely, which would mean saying things that you might find pretty cutting, or to say nothing at all about it, which tends to imply a negative judgement.

If you ever wanted to send me any of your stuff, I'd read it, with the understanding that if I said anything at all about it I would give an honest opinion and wouldn't pull any punches in criticizing it if and when I felt criticism was called for. So, you can show me some of your stuff some time if you want to, or not if you don't want to — it's up to you. The point I wanted to make is that the fact that I've never asked to read any of your stuff isn't just the result of disdainfulness.

I think it was a couple of years ago that you said you were practically certain that I could get a job with the bus company where you work if I wanted to. Does this still hold true? If so, it's possible I

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might want to take advantage of that some time in the next year or two — but it would have to be with the understanding that the job is temporary — for just a few months. Would it be equally easy to get jobs there at all times of year, and if not, what are the seasons of greatest demand? How long in advance would I have to make arrangements to get the job?

I notice an interesting phenomenon: When I read English and (North) American literature, I find that, more often than not, I dislike the author's personality (insofar as his personality manifests itself in his writing) even though I may appreciate his work. On the other hand, I find that I generally like the personalities of the Spanish-American writers that I've read (insofar as their personalities are manifested in their work). Of course, my exposure to Spanish-American literature is still limited, so it may be to early to generalize.

By the way, if you're still interested in learning Spanish, I could resume including Spanish passages in my letters for you to decipher. The mistake I made when I did that before was to: (1) make the passages too long, and (2) to make them an integral part of my letters. Thus I found it discouraging when you apparently (and understandably) took a long time to get around to deciphering the passages. I put a lot of work into writing those passages and also they contained material that I was anxious to communicate, and for both of those reasons it discouraged me to think that the passages might not get read for some time, or perhaps never. But now it occurs to me that I could make the passages quite brief (so it wouldn't

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be too burdensome for you to translate them) ③
and avoid including in them anything I was anxious to communicate (so that it wouldn't matter much if you never read them). Also, I can write Spanish with much more facility now, so that I won't feel I've wasted a lot of effort if you never get around to translating the passages. So let me know if you'd be interested in having me include such passages. If you're not interested, just say so. I'd try to make the passages humorous or otherwise entertaining.

Por comienzo: De Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution: Romme, Goujon y los demás [sans-culottes intransigentes] están en filas ante un tribunal militar presuroso y apresuradamente nombrado. Al escuchar la sentencia, Goujon sacó un cuchillo, se lo hincó en el pecho, y lo tendió a Romme, que le seguía en la fila; y cayó muerto. Romme hizo lo mismo; y otro hombre casi lo hizo; muerte romana precipitándose adelante como en cadena-eléctrica*, ¡antes de que pudiesen intervenir los alguaciles! A los demás los recibió la guillotina.

April 1: Nature's little April-fool's joke: This morning about one or one-thirty A.M. I was awakened by a minor earth-quake. I've felt earth-quakes here once or twice before, but this was about the most marked that I've experienced. Still, it didn't amount to much — it just felt as if the cabin were being gently shaken for maybe 5 seconds or so.

Some time ago I read a novel by Willa Cather. There was a photograph of Miss Cather on the dust jacket, and since her face was an unusual one I looked at it repeatedly and remembered it. Well, just now I'm reading an old (1940) book about

*The English is "electric-chain" — just what it means I don't know.

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Indians, and it's got some photos of old-time indians in it. There's this one squaw — her photo is labeled "Wetatonmi, wife of Ollokot" — and she is a dead ringer for Willa Cather. (4)

Just received your latest letter.

A further remark on the pygmies' ruthlessness toward animals: What they worship is the forest and the way of life it provides — Not the animals as such.* Eating the animals is part of the way of life. Hence I see no contradiction between worshipping the way of life and being ruthless toward the animals. Though, as I mentioned before, I personally am inclined to be sympathetic toward the animals.

In response to your remarks I would say:

1. You seem to assume (here and elsewhere) that to describe and understand something analytically is incompatible with appreciating it in emotional or (as you would probably prefer to put it) poetic terms. However, these things are by no means incompatible. Even though you personally seem to be "turned off" by analytic descriptions of things that have emotional significance for you.

2. You wrote: "Shouldn't we commence our effort to understand by appealing to their self-interpretation... are we really going to permit ourselves to learn from them something about the divine and the beautiful, or merely force them to play an indiscriminate role in the same old drama of practical economy? Isn't it a typical Western arrogance to insinuate explanations that would have been utterly foreign to their frame of consciousness?"

I would argue that the kind of explanation you would be prone to give (which I assume would be

*At least, this is what I gather from Turnbull's book.

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in terms of art, poetry, "the divine and the beautiful") would be at least as "foreign to their frame of consciousness" as my more prosaic remarks. Primitives just don't speak (or presumably think) in terms of "art", "beauty", "poetry" in the sense that we understand these terms. Most cultures do not have a concept of "art" in our sense of the word. They may experience something that we would classify as "art", but no such classification exists in their minds — or at least they have no words or phrases to describe such a classification. Pygmies live and celebrate their forest life, but apparently they don't much discuss it or study it. When asked by anthropologists about what we would call their "artistic" activities, or about their emotional life, primitives seem to give simple and elementary answers — naive even. This doesn't mean that they don't experience things deeply, but it does seem to mean that they don't much talk about or study their feelings or their art, etc.

So it would seem that if we are going to discuss the emotional life of primitives we have two choices: we can restrict ourselves to the limited vocabulary and concepts of the primitives themselves, in which case our discussion won't get very far, or we can introduce language and ideas that are "foreign to their frame of consciousness". And the artistic and philosophical notions — products of civilized and especially western culture — I feel sure are at least as foreign to pygmy thinking as are my remarks. I can support this contention by (to borrow your phrase) "appealing to their self-interpretation". I quote Turnbull, Chapter 5 (pp. 101-102 in my edition). "When I talked to the Pygmies about their treatment of animals, they laughed at me and said, 'The forest has given us animals for food — should we refuse this gift and starve?'" Doesn't this sound more like my explanation than the kind of thing

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you have in mind? Which is really more "foreign to their frame of consciousness?" Of course, the above comment of the pygmies' considers only a single aspect of the matter — the practical one. Whether they have ever thought much about other aspects of the matter is doubtful.

Perhaps you assumed that my remarks were referring only to the practical necessity of eating. If so, then you missed something that I was trying to get across — probably because I did an inadequate job of expressing it. At the time I wrote that stuff I was by no means satisfied that I had successfully conveyed what I meant to convey. I was trying to express a kind of stoicism, a kind of sense of the pygmies being on a status of equality with the animals rather than killing them as superior and uncomprehending outsiders. Well, I'm not going to try to express it now — skip it for the present.

Of course, it's true that I was trying to express an attitude toward pygmy culture as seen from the outside. It would by very difficult to discuss pygmy culture from the pygmies' point of view. How can we pretend to understand the pygmies well enough to discuss anything from their point of view? Especially since we've only read a book about them and haven't known them personally.

3. You seem to sneer at mere "practical economy." But later you remark that non-technological peoples seem to live in a world where "the practical and aesthetic essentials were unified." This is a very important observation. There is a tendency for intellectuals to sneer at "mere practical matters" because we live in a world where "practical

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economy" has become a mechanized tyrant. But practical activities in a primitive context are something quite different. They form an important — and I would even argue an essential — part of a fully fulfilling wilderness life. Your exposure to this aspect of it as yet has been very limited, I gather. Yet didn't you remark on the satisfaction you got from building your dugout shelter? — certainly a practical activity. And that's only a bare beginning.

By the way, I have a paperback copy of "The Forest People". Would you like to have it? I'll give it to you if you want it.

I enjoyed reading about your long hike. No, you're not getting too old for that sort of think — far from it. Trouble with getting old is (1) that if you once let yourself get out of shape for an extended period it's much harder to get back into shape, and (2) that when your older you're more likely to have acquired some specific ailment, such as arthritis, say, or a bad heart that would bar you from physically demanding stuff. Of course, someone over 40 isn't going to have the fine edge needed for high-level competitive athletics, but if you get enough exercise so that you don't get soft, and don't have the ill-luck to pick up an ailment or injury, it will be a long time before age will bar you from rugged hikes.

If you were hiking cross-country rather than following a well-beaten trail, 60 miles in three days is a good hike, since you presumably were carrying a load on your back. When carrying a pack I rarely have covered as much as twenty miles in a day — in fact, off-hand I can think of only one instance when I did so, and that was with a light pack. Of course, it's tougher in this steep mountain country where you're constantly climbing steep slopes.

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I can well appreciate your reaction to the rattlesnake and your sense of its dignity. I also have had experiences with animals that have impressed me with their personalities — in some cases I've had a strong sense of their dignity. I agree with your reluctance to sentimentalize animals. I don't think we necessarily sentimentalize or anthropomorphize when we apply terms like "dignity" to an animal. When we say an animal has "dignity" (or some other trait of "personality" as we may call it), we are expressing our reaction to certain characteristics of that animal — we are not (or shouldn't be, anyway) assuming that the animal has the same feelings or intentions as a human being who shows dignity. Also: you know that in my opinion, when one says that another being (human or animal) has "consciousness", the statement is unverifiable and therefore I see no way of assigning an objective meaning to it. Hence, when one ascribes consciousness to another being this is merely an expression of one's attitude toward that being. Like you, I take the attitude that animals have consciousness. Moreover, I see no reason to take the attitude that their consciousness is any less intense than ours*. I do see reason to consider their consciousness as far less complex than ours — obviously they are much less intelligent and their behavior patterns are much simpler than ours. But that needn't prevent us from respecting and appreciating them, or from experiencing a certain measure of identification with their simpler consciousness.

[Margin note:] Please don't argue this point. I'm only summarizing my opinion, not trying to convince you of anything; I know very well how you disagree with these views.

As for your finding the campground all fucked up — all I can say is that I sympathize. I've had analogous experiences all too often.

I'd be interested to see your spear-point some time.

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*People who claim "lower" animals have only "dull" feelings are just trying to rationalize their ruthlessness toward them — swatting or poisoning flies and that kind of stuff.

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I don't agree that appreciation of nature should be encouraged by public institutions. If anyone comes to appreciate nature because he is taught to appreciate it, then, as far as I am concerned, his appreciation has no value. And can you imagine what kind of nature appreciation could be encouraged by public institutions? TV commercials and high-school textbooks telling people how to look at the clouds, etc. . . . (9)

Of course, you may have meant something else when you said appreciation of nature should be encouraged by public institutions.

I'm sorry to hear about Joel. I only met him once, but he seemed like a nice fellow. I wonder whether the head injury is really responsible for his problems, or whether he got a bad gene from his mother?

You want to take me to Mexico with you? OK, how about this fall or winter? I haven't decided definitely yet whether I'll go with you at that time, but I'll try to make a decision within a month or so — then I'll let you know. You understand — I can't possibly afford the trip, but I may come in spite of that. I suppose I can always eat alder buds and thistle roots if it comes to that.

Let me know what times of year are most convenient for you, how long you want to make the trip, etc. etc. — all details insofar as you have any details in mind — and by the time it's time for me to answer your next letter I hope to have decided whether to live beyond my means by coming down there.

— Ted

P.S. You would have to promise not to talk about art, philosophy, esthetics, or any of that

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crap while I'm down there. You probably (10)
don't appreciate the effort of will that I have to make in order to refrain from giving offensive replies to some of your bullshit. When answering a letter I have time to cool down before writing my reply, but with oral communication there's no cooling-down time, so we probably wouldn't get along if you started talking about your favorite themes.

—Ted

P.S. You said you had "other irons in the fire". Just out of curiosity, what are they? If you feel this question to be an intrusion on your privacy, just ignore it.

I don't know, it's doubtful that I can make the trip. Can't afford it — cause it's bound to end up costing me more than just the $200 bus fare. Food on the way and so forth.

By the way, you may have misunderstood about the kind of translation work I hoped to get by advertising. This would not be stuff for publication, but like for instance if somebody is writing a thesis on history or something and needs material from a foreign language source he may want such and such chapters of such and such a book translated; or if somebody wants to write to sombody in a foreign country or something. I once saw one of these translators in action. I went to see this mathematics professor when I was a U. of Michigan. He had some woman there with a fat ass and a typewriter and he was ~~[illegible]~~ dictating to her in English a letter that he was writing to a French mathematician and she was typing the equivalent in French. If she was putting it in graceful French she must have had a lot of skill and experience. When translating to or from Spanish I have to do a lot of thinking if I don't want it to come out awkward.

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